

Fall 2015

Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) - Everything You Need to Know

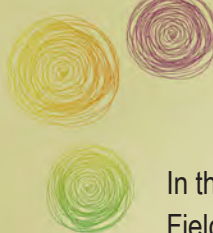
What is the KEA?

MDE has selected Teaching Strategies GOLD® online, an observation-based assessment system, for use as the KEA, and has customized the tool to meet the needs in Michigan. Michigan's Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) is a researched authentic observational system for assessing children in the first 45 days of kindergarten that has proven to be valid and reliable. Because of its observational nature, the KEA it is culturally and linguistically responsive and inclusive of all children and families. It helps teachers observe children in the context of everyday experiences, which is an effective way for teachers get to know their students well and find out what they know and can do. The KEA also aligns well with Michigan's Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Prekindergarten.

The first major step in Michigan's implementation of the KEA was in the summer of 2013 with the establishment of a series of focus groups to inform future communications. Schools and educators were recruited, and trainers were recruited to train kindergarten teachers who would be participating in the Fall 2013 Pilot. Below is an outline of significant activities since its inception:

- **July 2013**
 - o Conducted Accreditation Program for Trainers: 27 trainers accredited to train K teachers for the next 3 years
- **August 2013**
 - o ~300 K teachers trained
- **Fall 2013 Pilot**
 - o 68 districts, 81 schools, 163 teachers, and 3,755 students successfully participated





In the fall of 2014, Michigan implemented the 2014 Field Test that included a customized, reduced number of assessment items (41 items to be assessed vs. 50 items in 2013). MDE additionally worked towards improvement of data collection through the use of an Android App to easily allow educators to record their observations. And new professional learning opportunities were made available via online modules and in-person conferences.

The KEA's Purpose

The KEA is not a kindergarten screener, teacher or program evaluation tool, or kindergarten readiness assessment. MDE finds those uses inappropriate for this assessment. The KEA is intended to provide teachers and parents with important criterion-based information about a child's learning and development in five domains at the beginning of kindergarten so that teachers can inform individual instruction and parents can provide learning opportunities beyond the school day.


One of the greatest benefits of the KEA is information collected through other assessment tools or screeners can be used to inform a student's KEA. You will see that you are likely already collecting many pieces of information that align with the objectives and dimensions of a KEA.

The Five Domains

The five domains are:

- **Mathematics** – Learning early mathematical concepts strengthen young children's problem-solving and reasoning skills. The ability to count, measure, identify shapes, compose and decompose numbers is essential to future academic success and to participate in daily life activities.
- **Literacy and Language** – Literacy begins with language development. Language allows children to participate both cognitively and affectively within the school setting. Reading, writing, and speaking provide the tools children need to interact with others and to represent their ideas, thoughts, and experiences. Effective communication with others is basic to this dimension.
- **Approaches toward Learning** – A child's attitude toward and interest in learning define his or her approaches toward learning. Curiosity, creativity, independence, cooperation, and persistence are some of the approaches that enhance early learning and development. This domain is manifested in every other domain.
- **Social and Emotional Development** – Developing strong relationships with adults and other children help children positively participate in classroom and school activities. In addition, developing strong relationships help children develop characteristics such as self-confidence that are useful when trying to make and keep friends and when cooperating in groups.
- **Physical Well-Being and Motor Development** – Healthy children are ready children. Healthy children are more prepared to learn and perform at higher levels. Large/gross and small/fine motor skills are essential for health and for accomplishing school tasks such as cutting, coloring, using a pencil, keyboarding, and navigating the internet.





KEA Domain Selection

In 1995, the National Education Goals Panel identified these five essential dimensions (developmental domains) of early development and learning as relevant to school readiness.

Child Trends, a nonprofit, nonpartisan research center, reports the following about the importance of assessing these five domains.

School readiness, a multi-dimensional concept, conveys important advantages. Children who enter school with early skills, such as a basic knowledge of math and reading, are more likely than their peers to experience later academic success, attain higher levels of education, and secure employment. Absence of these and other skills may contribute to even greater disparities down the road. For example, one study found that gaps in math, reading, and vocabulary skills evident at elementary school entry explained at least half of the racial gap in high school achievement scores.

In addition, their report includes the importance of assessing the noncognitive domains.

While cognitive development and early literacy are important for children's school readiness and early success in school, other areas of development (i.e., health, social development, engagement) may be of equal or greater importance.

Retrieved from Internet on June 5, 2013: <http://www.childtrends.org/?indicators=early-school-readiness>.

Furthermore, research about school readiness suggests that a child's approaches toward learning are powerful predictors of his or her later success in school.

Objectives

These domains encompass a set of objectives for development and learning that include predictors of school success and are based on school readiness standards. MDE is in the process of finalizing the revised set of objectives with a KEA Focus Group for the 2015 Fall KEA and will have that information available for teachers participating in the summer trainings.

Reports for the Classroom

The KEA provides aggregated and disaggregated reports that show what a child knows and is able to do in the five domains assessed. The following are available to educators:

- o Widely Held Expectations Report
- o Performance and Growth Report
- o Alignment Report
- o Class Profile
- o Individual Child
- o Snapshot

For more information about the reports generated by KEA data please review the Teaching Strategies GOLD Reports document at <https://shop.teachingstrategies.com/content/pageDocs/GOLD-assessment-system-reports-brochure.pdf>.

School and District Participation in KEA

Any public or non-public schools providing Kindergarten in Michigan are eligible to participate (for example school districts and faith-based schools) at no cost to districts, schools, or teachers.



Student Participation in KEA

All teachers of Kindergarten age students can participate, this includes developmental kindergarten teachers and their students. All students who start school by the third week of school should be assessed with the KEA. If a student is absent from school 15 days or more, you do not need to complete the KEA for them.

Basics of the Observation Tool

The KEA facilitates teachers learning the strengths their students bring with them during their first few weeks of school. Once teachers complete the observations they will then need to enter the information into the online TS GOLD system. Once that process is complete they will then have immediate access to individual student and class reports that the system will generate. Teachers can use these reports to inform their instruction for the beginning of the year and to share the strengths of children with parents and families. Districts, schools and teachers can decide to use this assessment throughout the school year, at no further charge, documenting student growth and accessing intervention plans when necessary, for each domain.

Teachers will be expected to gather documentation around the KEA Objectives. Documentation is the evidence teachers gather to support the professional judgment about the child's developing skills, abilities and behaviors. Teachers can store their documentation online or through files, and can combine the online and paper file documentation options. Many teachers prefer to use the Documentation App to quickly collect and upload documentation for their students.

As noted above, Kindergarten teachers will be expected to enter their student observation information into the online TS Gold system. Data entry into the online system is more than a technical task. It requires judgment about the student's developing level of skill. Teachers can learn how to use the KEA to evaluate the developing skill levels of the students through the face to face professional learning options this summer (2015) being provided by the state and for additional resources, participate in the online training modules provided by TS Gold.

To reiterate, documentation is the evidence teachers gather to support their judgments and data entry is the process of making judgments about students' skills, knowledge and abilities.

Length of Time for Observations and Entering Student Data

Because this is an observational measure based on children's participation in the kindergarten classroom, completion times for the observation, documentation, and data entry process vary from teacher to teacher, and it gets easier and quicker with time and repeated use.

Based on experiences from others using the tool, the estimate for entering checkpoint information on-line is 20 to 60 minutes per child with additional time devoted to gathering evidence for entering the checkpoint information. Use of the new KEA Observation Tool will make the assessment process go even quicker. Teachers should not wait until the end of the observation period to enter data. Because the KEA is an observation-based tool, teachers need time to observe. But it is appropriate to enter data over time. The tool will be available to teachers at the start of the school year.





Observation Window

The fall Observation Window, including data entry, runs from **September 8, 2015 – October 31, 2015**. The most valid and reliable data is gathered during the first 8 weeks of school. This is to ensure kindergarten entrance skills, without the impact of classroom instruction, as much as possible. If the student demonstrates the knowledge, skill or behavior during the observation period, it should be recorded.

Assessing children on some of the dimensions prior to the start of the school year is not allowable. However, the choice to use this tool at no extra cost at additional points in time after the school year has begun is a district decision. Dates and times can be locally determined.

Administrator Qualifications

Certified Kindergarten teachers are able to observe, gather documentation, and enter student data. Paraprofessionals or other support people in the classrooms can, under the teacher's direction, help gather documentation in the forms of photos, videos, or work samples for the teacher to review and evaluate. Because paraprofessionals have not been trained in using the tool, they should not be asked to enter information into the online system. To ensure student privacy, teachers should never share their password with anyone.

In order to assure that the data is reliable and of high quality, only people trained on the KEA observation protocol may observe and enter data. However, kindergarten teachers may find it helpful to consult with the speech and language staff and Title I teachers as well as their physical education teacher colleagues to help set up activities that assist and inform the kindergarten teacher on a variety of dimensions

Training

Teachers are required to complete Inter-rater Reliability Certification by **September 4, 2015**. This will assist teachers in feeling confident that their rating of individual students' abilities is consistent with the rating another teacher would provide for that same student.

A series of optional professional development opportunities are available during the summer of 2015 to provide teachers with information around developmentally appropriate practices for Kindergartners aligned to Michigan's Standards as well as provide an opportunity to learn how to use the TS Gold Tool and data entry system.



Michigan Specific Questions

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Teaching Strategies GOLD® Support

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